



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

P.O. Box 45010, Olympia, Washington 98504-5000

August 12, 2004

Aaron Reardon, Snohomish County Executive
3000 Rockefeller Avenue, MS 407
Everett, Washington 98201-4046

Janelle Sgrignoli, Director
Snohomish County Human Services
2722 Colby Avenue, Suite 104
Everett, Washington 98201

Dear Mr. Reardon and Ms. Sgrignoli:

This week, after assessing input from the Community Advisory Committee as well as the ongoing research and planning of the Washington Medicaid integration Partnership Project team, I am asking the WMIP planners to make two major changes in our implementation plans:

- I believe that community providers have raised a valid concern about the earlier decision to separate outpatient and inpatient mental health coverage within WMIP, and we should move in the opposite direction – integrating these two functions within the pilot project. Involuntary treatment services will remain with the county.
- The timeline for implementation of mental health services for the WMIP population has also stirred concern that it does not allow for an orderly and confusion-free transition for our clients, many of whom are elderly and disabled. I have asked that this timeline be reviewed in light of the addition of mental health inpatient coverage.

These changes will not interfere with implementation of WMIP's medical and chemical dependency components on schedule – January 1, 2005. In fact, they may have the further advantage of bringing the mental health and long-term care implementation (now tentatively scheduled for July of 2005) closer together, even allowing full integration of these two components when they begin. That will also help make the project more comprehensive and coherent for providers and clients as it gets underway.

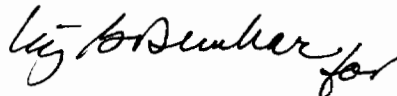
The decision to retool WMIP's mental health benefit structure to fully integrate outpatient and inpatient mental health services should help us avoid any negative impacts on consumers when these services are implemented under WMIP. I know that community mental health providers expressed concerns about limiting WMIP to outpatient coverage because it could impact continuity of care, and access to services. It could also result in cost-shifting and diversion of funds from client care to administrative functions. It is our belief that the integration of inpatient and outpatient is a major step toward addressing and resolving these concerns.

I am aware, of course, that this change alone may not address all concerns in the community about the future of North Sound Mental Health Association (NSMHA) and its funding. But I can reiterate our intent that the division of funding will be proportional to the client base and that there should be no resulting degradation of services for non-WMIP Medicaid clients in Snohomish County or in the other NSMHA counties. In addition, I know that we will continue to monitor this situation through the WMIP pilot in order to make sure that the theoretical does indeed become factual as we move ahead.

This full integration of outpatient and inpatient mental health services for WMIP enrollees will simplify access to mental health services and support coordination of care. But implementation should not occur until WMIP and the community are satisfied that the contractor has developed a sufficient network and can offer the required continuum of inpatient and outpatient mental health services. That brings us to the WMIP timetable and the need to be absolutely confident that we have built in adequate planning for a smooth transition between the fee-for-service and managed-care systems. An integrated mental health benefit may take more time to implement, but I am certain the result will be less confusion for clients and providers of care as well as a smoother, more rewarding partnership between your community's care systems and DSHS.

I look forward to our continued association on this project, which we all believe has profound implications for the future delivery of Medicaid services in Washington State. I appreciate the time and effort that Community Advisory Committee members have invested in the WMIP pilot project and its eventual success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Braddock", with a stylized flourish at the end.

DENNIS BRADDOCK
Secretary